the eight families and the central plot being reserved for residences and the raising of the produce which went to the lord. The title was vested in the lord. Permanent individual peasant ownership appears not to have been thought of. New land was cleared as the old was exhausted, and periodical reassignment was the rule. The size of the *ching* varied with the quality of the soil. As irrigation and methods of cultivation improved, residence and boundaries between fields were of longer duration, only the poorer soil being allowed periodically to lie fallow. While the peasant did not own the soil, apparently he was permanently attached to certain districts, and so, like the European serf, enjoyed a better status than that of slavery. Probably not until toward the close of the Chou dynasty did peasant proprietorship prevail. Wei Yang is credited—possibly incorrectly—with having made it the rule in Ch'in. The *cUng t'ien* system gradually disintegrated, and by the third century B.C. (probably even as early as the sixth century) it was passing away.

Much of the work of bringing waste lands into cultivation, of draining swarnps and constructing canals for irrigation, seems to have been performed by the state. While possibly accelerated under some of the great feudatories in the closing years of the Chou, it had been in progress for centuries and must have entailed great labor for many generations of peasants and officials.

As towns grew and as the Chinese extended their domains and became more numerous, commerce and industry seem to have expanded. The rise to power in Ch'in of a merchant, Lii Pu-wei, may have been symptomatic of the increased importance of his class. The introduction of coined money, about

the beginning of the first millennium B.C., probably had a profound effect upon the social and economic organization of the time.

SOCIAL **ORGANIZATION**

It was only during the season when the land was cultivated that the peasants lived on it. During the winter they were gathered into villages, where each family had its permanent and separate home. Some homes were caves dug in the loess where it rose in sharp cliffs. Others were built of mud. The villages, as we have seen, were usually walled and clustered about the residence of an official, often the seignior's home and ancestral hall.